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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR IO/T, IO/EDA

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TAGS: [ECON](#) [UNCTAD](#)

SUBJECT: UNCTAD Communication Strategy-Mission assists

¶1. SUMMARY: In order to help the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) elaborate its first ever communications strategy, on June 16, the Mission hosted a meeting between delegates from 11 key missions, including regional coordinators, and UNCTAD staff. After hearing a presentation on UNCTAD's draft communication strategy and website plans, delegates completed a survey on their website usage and provided feedback to the UNCTAD Communications Director. Based on that feedback UNCTAD will revise its communications strategy to make meeting delegates needs its top communications priority. The luncheon was followed-up with a visit by the US mission public affairs counselor to UNCTAD, at which UNCTAD's lack of budget and staff to work on communications, and the need to educate staff and management on communications venues was highlighted. END SUMMARY.

¶2. Mission officer invited the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) Secretariat, and delegates who serve as UNCTAD regional coordinators, to a working luncheon at the Mission on Tuesday, June 16, 2009. Recognizing that its website is used differently by different users, UNCTAD has attempted to identify different groups of users and how to best address their needs.

Website use by delegates

¶3. The regional coordinators indicated that mainly they use the website for the calendar and background papers, and that an updated calendar program and a bigger electronic archive of past resolutions and papers would be useful. The coordinators confirmed that higher levels of government usually do not visit the website, as UNCTAD is usually not at the top of their priority list, but rather that the website should cater more towards mid-level government officials, experts and academics, particularly in developing nations where many users lack access to high speed internet. Delegates suggested policy makers in home countries and Geneva would also be interested in knowing travel by UNCTAD staff so that Geneva delegates could facilitate introductions to relevant offices and would know in advance about UNCTAD travel to their countries.

Website Design

¶4. Most delegates found the website layout unsatisfactory. A Mission officer presented the World Bank's website as a good example UNCTAD could try to emulate, pointing out the utility of country and regional profiles linked to a world map. The UNCTAD search engine, a recognized weak spot, was also an issue for many countries, who wanted to see links to relevant pages outside of UNCTAD. Delegates recommended that the website more thoroughly reflect the three pillars of UNCTAD's work program, and particularly asked for more information about technical assistance projects in each country.

¶5. Delegates requested UNCTAD provide training on its programs to

new delegates and the public and NGOs who would like to learn more about UNCTAD. One coordinator suggested a training session, similar to the one held by the WTO during "Geneva Week," as a model.

¶16. Several new applications for the website were suggested to supplement the current materials. Delegates favored establishment of a delegate portal on the UNCTAD website. Podcasts and webcasts were also suggested by UNCTAD, but delegates said they would not have enough time to watch and listen to them.

¶17. The officials from the UNCTAD secretariat were very happy to have the input from everyone who attended, and planned to include their feedback in the design of the website as they continued to update it.

COMMENT

¶18. The UNCTAD website (www.unctad.org) fails to live up to its potential in its current state, and is lacking in utility for most of its users, especially the delegates. The Accra Accord, UNCTAD's governing mandate, calls for development of a communications strategy and implementation of an updated publications policy in paragraphs 186-188, but UNCTAD has no funding earmarked for communications in the budget, and an extremely broad and unprioritized mandate. UNCTAD's director of communications and two staff are acutely aware of the challenges and lack of resources, so particularly appreciated hearing delegates needs so the communications office can better prioritize its work within very limited resources. UNCTAD'S first priority should be to redesign the website to be more useful to the delegates, reflecting the suggestions given during the working lunch, and then to hold similar focus groups with other targeted users, like academics or the media. End Comment.

FOLLOW UP

¶19. The US Mission Public Affairs Counselor to UNCTAD met with UNCTAD staff on June 24 to discuss the creation of a communications strategy. During this meeting, UNCTAD made apparent the lack of resources and staff UNCTAD has to create and execute a communications strategy.

¶10. COMMENT: UNCTAD staff showed a great interest in improving communications, and candidly admitted that they were lacking in that department. Although the United States generally pushes for UNCTAD to be more frugal in its spending, it is essential that UNCTAD stay in contact with the populations the organization is trying to serve. Public Affairs Counselor met with UNCTAD's new Deputy Secretary General Draganov (Bulgaria) and emphasized the importance of an effective and funded communications strategy to the organization's ability to make an impact. END COMMENT

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